

MEDALS AND MEMORIES MINUTES



Lt.-Col. William George Barker
Image "Manitoba Historical Society/Archives of Manitoba"

WWI pilot ace, Wing

Commander William George

Barker, was the most decorated Canadian soldier in WWI; no one has surpassed his record. Barker's pal, Owen Sound born William "Billy" Bishop, also a pilot ace, was credited with 72 victories, but fell short of

Barker's medal count. The two ran Bishop-Barker Aeroplanes

for about three years after WWI. Bishop received his Victoria Cross for his actions June 2, 1917, when he single-handedly attacked a German air base on the Arras front. He destroyed seven airplanes on the ground and shot down another four before leaving the scene due to a lack of ammunition. Barker earned his Victoria Cross Oct. 27, 1918, in a dogfight with 15 or more enemy aircraft. Although wounded three times in the legs and with his left elbow blown almost away, Barker controlled his Snipe aircraft to bring down a four enemy aircraft before crash landing behind British lines in France. Bleeding heavily, Barker would have died but for the speedy actions of the RAF Kite Balloon Section which transported him to a field dressing station. Both Barker and Bishop were credited with having exceptional eyesight and being exceptional shots. The play *Billy Bishop Goes to War* by John Gray and Eric Petersen, chronicles Billy Bishop, Commander of the "Flying Foxes" and the greatest Commonwealth Ace of the war. Barker became the first president of the Toronto Maple Leafs Hockey Club.